

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (cancelled)

2. (cancelled)

3-24. (cancelled)

25-33. (Cancelled).

34. (Currently Amended) A rinsing method comprising:

a first step for accommodating an article, to be rinsed, into a second container which is disposed inside a first container;

a second step for introducing an rinsing gas or an ozone gas into the second container;

a third step for irradiating the article with ultraviolet rays from a light source disposed inside the first container but outside the second container; and

a fourth step for introducing a nitrogen gas into the second container and stopping introduction of the oxygen gas or ozone gas.

35. (Previously Presented) A rinsing method according to Claim 34, wherein the second container has a clearance through the first container, wherein the second container is maintained at an ambience different from that of the first container and is kept at an internal pressure higher than that of the first container in the second step, and wherein the rinsing gas in the second container is discharged into the first container through the clearance while a gas in the first container is exhausted at the fourth step.

36. (New) A rinsing method according to claim 34, wherein the article is a light transmission type optional element.
37. (New) A rinsing method according to claim 34, wherein the article is made of one of quartz and fluorite, and wherein the article is an optical element adapted to be used with a wavelength region of 200 nm or shorter.